

What exactly is the mental health index for adolescents in French-speaking Africa?

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), every day, nearly 20 teenagers commit suicide on the African continent.



Source: [Pxabay](#)

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15 to 29 year olds, and nearly 37 million teenagers aged 10 to 19 live with a mental disorder in Africa, an alarming situation when we know that by 2050, 40% of young people in the world will live in Africa. In this context, the Bluemind Foundation has published the first mental health index of adolescents and young adults in French-speaking Africa.

Based on a field survey of 929 teenagers and young adults in Cameroon (Douala, Yaoundé, Dschang, Bafoussam, Garoua, Maroua), Côte d'Ivoire (Abidjan) and Togo (Lomé), the Index teaches us that:

- Only 31% of the young people surveyed have heard of mental-health diagnoses such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder.
- 84% of young Africans are mentally affected by the advent of the Covid-19 health crisis, and depression affects all young people, regardless of their gender identity.
- 23% of the population surveyed say they are affected in their wellbeing by climate change.
- 14.2% of teenagers and young African adults said they wanted to end their life in the month preceding the survey, and
- It is the category of young people aged 18 to 25 with a significantly higher risk of reporting having attempted suicide.

The mental health index for adolescents and young people in French-speaking Africa is 0.4 on a scale of 0 to 1.

This value is an alarming reflection of the low state of youth mental health in Africa, resulting mainly from the socio-economic and psychological ills suffered by African youth and poor awareness of de-stigmatisation, not to mention the near-unavailability of access to mental health care.

"The prevalence of mental health disorders among our generation portends two things: a difficulty for society to properly address the subject of mental health with its most vulnerable population (young people) and an urgent call for doing better.

The answer to the questions

"But, to do better, you have to know what problem to address, how to address it, and what the end beneficiaries expect. It is precisely an answer to these questions that this index provides," said Martin Lingom, programme manager of the Bluemind Foundation's teen youth tank."

The findings of this index confirm that it is urgent to mobilise for the mental health of young people in Africa, proposing sustainable solutions today for the adults of tomorrow.

"[The findings] are an invitation to implement a global multisectoral strategy so that this alarming situation does not remain ignored and neglected.

"At the same time, Africa has hope, a hope that rests on its youth, a youth unfortunately sick. It is a citizenship issue that engages the responsibility of all of us. Will we collectively be up to the challenge?" concludes Marie-Alix de Putter, founding president of the Bluemind Foundation.

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